

Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Information Session
February 11, 2016

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) Overview

- Authorized by the 2004 & 2014 Farm Bills
- Administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
- Enhances the competitiveness of U.S. specialty crops
- U.S. statute defines specialty crops as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).”
- Includes honey, hops, maple syrup & Christmas trees
- Eligible processed products must consist of greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.

Vermont SCBGP Basics

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) awards Specialty Crop Block Grants to the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories.
- In Vermont, the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM) sub-awards these funds to projects to benefit Vermont specialty crops.
- Each year, VAAFM consults with industry stakeholders to set state funding priorities prior to issuing a request for proposals (RFP).
- All projects must be approved by AMS before funds are awarded.

Eligibility

- Any entity may apply, but projects must benefit **more than one** business or organization.
- SCBGP funds must **solely enhance the competitiveness** of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets.
 - *If **matching funds** will serve as a mechanism to ensure all grant funds will solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops, you must keep adequate records to identify the specific costs or contributions proposed to meet the match as well as document how the valuation was determined.*
- Each project must identify **at least one outcome measure** that specifically demonstrates the project's impact in solely enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.
- The program will not award funds to an entity to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services or fund projects where one organization attempts to disparage the mission, goals, and/or actions of another organization.

Previously Funded & Multi-State Projects

Applications that build on a previously funded SCBGP project

Application should clearly indicate how the project complements previous work and the likelihood that the project will become self-sustaining

Multi-state projects that address challenges and opportunities that cross state boundaries

- *Applicant submits a SCBGP application to each state where businesses or organizations will serve as project partners*
- *OR applies to the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP)*

Matching Funds

- All VT SCBGP projects must show matching funds representing 50% of the grant request.
 - *Example: A proposal with a SCBGP request of \$10,000 must show a minimum of \$5,000 in matching funds.*
 - *Matching funds may be a combination of cash and in-kind funds.*
- Under limited circumstances, the match requirement may be reduced or waived for projects that can justify the need for a reduced match.
 - *Waiver requests must outline the impact of the project and indicate any special circumstances that justify this consideration.*
- Matching funds may be used to ensure all SCBGP funds will solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.
 - *Example: a project promotes Vermont-grown specialty crops through marketing agritourism opportunities. Non-specialty crop farms account for 40% of the farms participating in the agritourism program; therefore a 50% match will be adequate to account for any benefit the non-specialty crops farms could gain from the proposed project.*

Acceptable & Unacceptable Projects

Your application should demonstrate how the proposed project will impact and produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry—rather than a single business, organization, or individual.

- A specialty crop organization requests funds to promote its organization.
 - *Unacceptable*
- A group requests funds to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area and to share results with growers throughout the state.
 - *Acceptable*
- An organization requests funds to promote Vermont specialty crops to new markets, and access to these markets will benefit a variety of specialty crop producers.
 - *Acceptable*
- A farm requests funds to market its roadside stand or another aspect of its individual business.
 - *Unacceptable*

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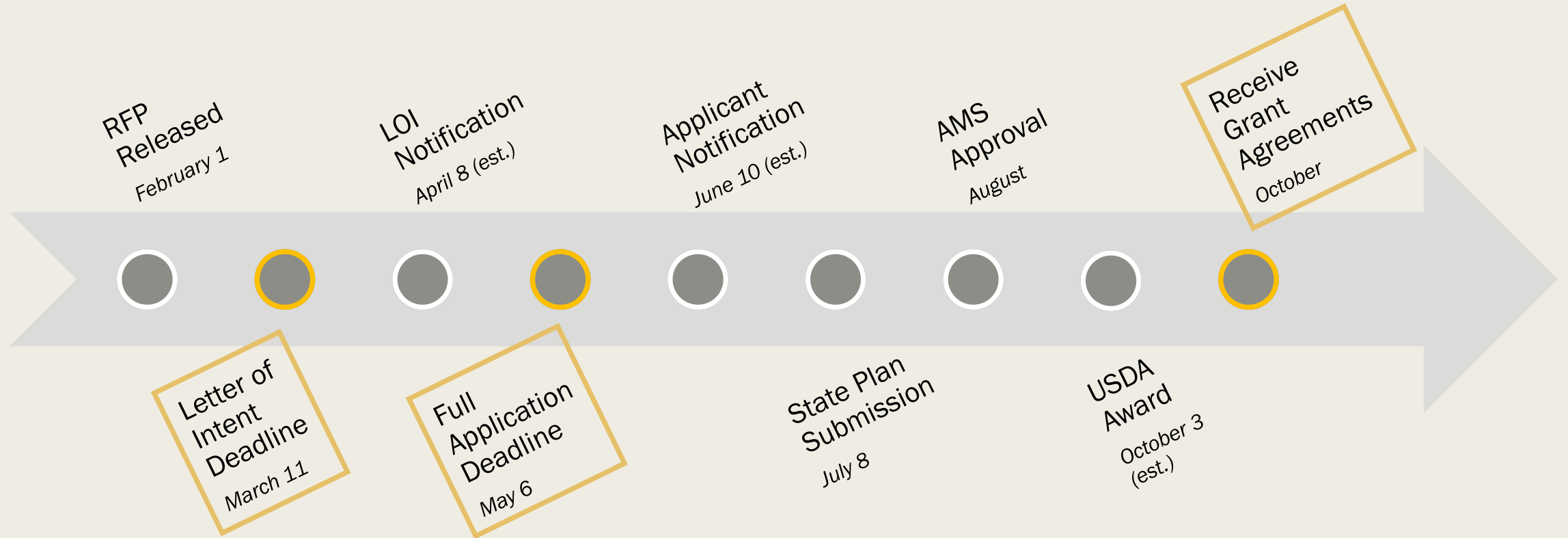
- *A company requests funds to purchase equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit or to expand production within a single business.*
 - *Unacceptable*
- *A grower requests funds to establish a new cooperative that will help other specialty crop producers diversify their operations and meet market demand.*
 - *Acceptable*
- *A group requests funds to launch a promotion campaign to increase brand awareness of “Vermont Grown.”*
 - *Unacceptable*
- *A group requests funds to launch a promotional campaign to increase sales of “Vermont Grown Sweet Corn.”*
 - *Acceptable*

State Funding Priorities

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, in partnership with statewide specialty crop stakeholders, has identified the following program funding priorities for 2016. Funding priorities are *not* ranked.

- Development of innovative horticultural production practices and efficiencies to positively impact farm viability and/or conservation
- Pest and disease management
- Food safety—including the handling, preparation, transport, and storage of specialty crops in ways that reduce foodborne illness
- Value chain enhancement—including strengthening relationships between individuals, businesses, and organizations that build specialty crop value from production to consumption
- Market access (local, regional, national, or international), marketing, branding, and consumer education
- Organizational development—including strengthening producer associations and cooperative development

Vermont SCBGP Timeline



New! USDA Evaluation Plan

- Beginning in 2016, AMS will be required to report SCGBP outcomes at a national scale to demonstrate the program's performance.
- By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all states and territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCGBP with all stakeholders, including the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congress, the agricultural community, and the general public.
- Each funded proposal must include at least one of eight specified **outcome measures** and at least one **indicator** that gives a quantifiable result.
- AMS will aggregate the data collected to assess the overall impact of the program and report to OMB and Congress on these national outcome measures.

Outcome Measures 1–4

(a.k.a. Expected Measurable Outcomes)

- Outcome 1: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales – required for marketing & promotion projects
- Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption
- Outcome 3: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access
- Outcome 4: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources

Outcome Measures 5–8

- Outcome 5: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems
- Outcome 6: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety
- Outcome 7: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources
- Outcome 8: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development

Marketing & Promotion Projects

- Marketing and Promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue.

Examples

Uses of social media to market and promote

Specialty crop local, regional and national campaigns

Specialty crop only tradeshow

Website promotion and development

Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads; marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures

Agritourism

Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging, etc.

Export market development

Farmers market promotions

Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers

Outcome Measures & Indicators for Marketing & Promotion Projects

- Outcome 1: To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales
- *Indicator: Sales increased from \$ _____ to \$ _____ and by _____ percent as result of marketing and/or promotion activities*
- This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars must should already exist at the time of application.
- For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine such a baseline in order to meet the requirement to document the value of sales increases by the end of the project.
- Factors and events that either positively or negatively impacted the sales of a project can be explained in the performance report.

Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption

Indicators

1. Of the _____ total number of children and youth reached,
 - *a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops*
 - *b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops*
 - *c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops*
2. Of the _____ total number of adults reached,
 - *a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops*
 - *b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops*
 - *c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops*
3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents) _____
4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers_____

Outcome 7: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources

Indicators

Number of projects focused on:

1. Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens _____
2. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain _____
3. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors _____
4. Increased understanding of pre-harvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats _____
5. Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices) _____

How to Apply

Submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) by March 11, 2016


- A summary of your project & estimated timeline
 - *The specific issue, problem, or need your project will address*
 - *The objectives your project hopes to achieve*
 - *Your project's impact on the specialty crop industry*
- Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support the project and explain why.
- Choose at least one **outcome measure**.
- Describe your monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Provide an estimated budget, including matching funds.

Estimated Project Budget

Category	SCBGP Request	Matching Funds	Match Source	Total Project Cost
Personnel (Salaries/Wages)				
Fringe Benefits				
Travel				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Contractual				
Other				
Total				

After reviewing LOIs, the review committee will invite applicants with the top-ranking proposals to submit full applications.

New! WebGrants Grants Management System (GMS)

<p>Log In</p> <p>User ID: * <input type="text"/></p> <p>Password: * <input type="password"/></p> <p><input type="button" value="Log In"/></p> <p>Forgot User Id?</p> <p>Forgot Password?</p>	 <p>VERMONT</p> <p>New to WebGrants - Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets?</p> <p>Register Here</p>
<p>Announcements</p> <p><u>Do not register more than once!</u></p> <p>Remember to <u>turn off and disable</u> your <u>script, javascript, and ad blockers</u> as well as <u>pop-up blockers</u> when entering the Vermont Agency of Agriculture grants site.</p>	

<https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov>

Questions?

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<http://go.usa.gov/3JGBG> (case sensitive URL)